



FOCUS GROUP REPORT PHASE I

Client:

SEATTLE KING COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

Project Description:

Smoking prevention focus group
findings and report

Date:

March 20, 2003

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Table of Contents

Introduction – Phase I	3
Purpose	3
Methodology	3
Existing Posters	4
Summary	5
Recommendations	8
Group Profiles	9
Group 1 – Center For Career Alternatives	9
Group 2 – Shoreline Community College	9
Group 3 – West Seattle Youth Center	9
Group 4 – People of color Against Aids network (POCAAN)	10
Group 5 – the lambert house	10
Group Characteristics	10
Smoking Behaviors	12
Defining Cool	15
Existing Advertising –	17
The Three Posters	17
Poster #1 – Sucked In	17
Poster #2 – Poster Child	17
Poster #3 – Impotent	18
Anti-Smoking Advertising	19
Appendix	22
Smoke Cigarettes	22
Drink coffee	22
Use Other tobacco Products	22
Smoke marijuana	23
Use Other Drugs	23
Creative Rationale	24
Poster Concepts	28
Introduction – Phase II	30
Purpose	31
Methodology	31
Summary	32
Conclusion & Recommendations	33
Final Creative	34



Introduction

Purpose

King County Public Health (KCPH) and their advertising agency, EXCLAIM, developed an advertising campaign using posters that targeted young adult smokers, aged 18 to 24 years of age, who lived in ethnic and minority communities within King County. Similar poster campaigns have been conducted in other areas of the country and EXCLAIM and KCPH wanted to measure the effectiveness of these posters among the local audience.

The intent of the posters was to provide these young adults with information about the health dangers associated with smoking and encourage them to quit. For this campaign, KCPH wanted to use all or some of the existing poster advertisements that were created for other governmental agencies in other locales. The purpose of the focus groups were to:

- Understand the underlying motivations and behaviors for smoking in the 18-24 age group.
- Test the existing creative for comprehension and appeal within the target audience.
- Develop an understanding of the importance of racial and ethnic depictions in advertising.
- Identify any potential red flags or cultural misunderstandings that these posters may convey.
- Identify possible creative directions, if new advertising was needed.

Methodology

A total of five focus groups were conducted, beginning on 11 February 2003 and ending on 5 March 2003. These groups were held in youth centers and other locations in King County that provide social services to young adults; each group had 10-13 attendees. Participants were recruited by the directors of these agencies using guidelines provided by KCPH and EXCLAIM. Most of the participants were aged 18 to 24; a few 16 year-olds attended, as did three older individuals. The majority of the attendees for three of the groups were African-American. One group was entirely Latino; Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders were also represented in some of the groups. The last group was comprised of white, Latino, and African-American youth that were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and/or homeless.

In total, 41 attendees identified themselves as smokers; 19 were non-smokers.

The focus groups each lasted approximately 2 hours. Attendees were paid \$10; they would receive an additional \$30 if they returned for a follow-up group that was to be held in April.

Note: Qualitative research is based on small sample sizes. The findings of this study should not be considered to be representative of the total population of young adults aged 18-24. Observation and understanding of the reactions within this sample are useful in identifying the motivations of targeted individuals.



Existing Government Posters:



Summary

Messaging about smoking has been received and understood

- Most, if not all, of the attendees had an understanding of the effects and dangers of smoking. They were familiar with much of the past and present anti-smoking advertising. They recalled many of the television spots produced by the Truth Campaign, as well as print and television advertising featuring Debbie, the woman who smokes via her tracheotomy tube.
- They were familiar with smoking-caused illnesses, including lung cancer, emphysema, and mouth cancer.

A disconnect exists between young adult smokers in the present and the future reality presented by anti-smoking advertising

- While they understood the effects of smoking on the human body, these young adults cannot connect these problems to their current reality. In their world, cancer and other potentially fatal smoking-related conditions happen to older people, if at all. Others adopt a more fatalist point of view – believing that they are more likely to be killed by something else before smoking does.
- For the most part, the young adults – both smokers and non-smokers – who participated in this study did not understand that marijuana smoke has long-term health effects that are at least as harmful as cigarette smoke. Marijuana is regarded as being more pure or organic than commercially produced tobacco.

The existing posters were viewed as less effective as desired

- While most attendees understood the messaging of both Sucked In and Poster Child, they did not feel that these posters would motivate anyone to stop smoking. They doubted the veracity of the messaging 1) the government would not allow the sale of products with toxins like those listed in Sucked In; and 2) a young girl would not have these symptoms and afflictions at her age; these would occur at a much later time, if at all.
- A number of young men did not understand the meaning behind Impotency until it was explained to them.
- These existing posters may work better for grammar school target.

Future advertising needs to portray more realistic, more multi-cultural images

- Most of the participants felt that both anti-smoking and general advertising do not depict individuals to whom they can personally relate. The images are often "too white", "too skinny", and "too beautiful." They do not reflect the world as these young adults experience it. Smoking likely starts where there is a problem in someone's life. Whether it be their relationship with their parents, friends or school officials or their own self worth... there is a reason that kids begin smoking and it isn't because it tastes good.



Posters alone may not be effective at encouraging smoking cessation

- Posters were not seen as especially effective communication tools by participants. They may be more effective as a secondary medium supporting other media, promotions, or programs.

Even when they know they were being influenced or manipulated by large tobacco companies, smokers didn't change their behavior and have little, if any, resentment towards these firms

- Almost all of the African-Americans who participated in these focus groups smoked either Cool or Newport branded cigarettes. Several of them mentioned – on an unaided basis – their awareness that the tobacco companies who market these brands specifically target African-Americans.

Smoking is often one of the lesser problems troubling inner city young adults

- All but one group was conducted among socio-economically-disadvantaged young adults who live in or near the inner city. Many face problems or challenges such as poverty, homelessness, lack of education or vocational skills, parenthood, drug abuse and addiction, alcoholism, AIDS, and gang violence. As an issue, smoking ranked relatively low on their list of concerns.

Smoking begins at an early age for most young adult smokers

- For most of these young adults, smoking began in middle school or early high school. Some kids took their first drag from a cigarette as young as four years of age – courtesy of a parent or other close relative. However, the typical age taking up smoking was 11 to 15 years of smoking for attendees.

Curiosity was the reason most often given for smoking the first cigarette

- Many of the participants smoked their first cigarette out of curiosity. For most, the experience was unpleasant; they experienced nausea, coughing, and lightheadedness. Curiosity was also the reason they smoked their second cigarette – largely because they did not understand why people continued to smoke, if the experience was so unpleasant. In other words, they thought they had missed something or not smoked correctly.
- A number of participants were given their first cigarette by a sibling or other close relative like a cousin.

"Fitting in" was the reason many young adults continued to smoke

- Being part of a larger social group – fitting in – was the reason given most often for continuing to smoke. Smoking is a behavior among their peers that makes them more socially accepted.

Mood-control was the second most frequent reason for smoking

- Several of these young adults smoked to relieve stress and/or depression. These individuals tended to be more likely to smoke alone, rather than smoking with friends or peers. However, we should note the reason people were able to feel more relaxed when they smoked was because they were addicted and it is the lack of the chemical which they were addicted to that made them agitated in the first place.



Brushing one's teeth and practicing good hygiene warded off smoking-related conditions and disease

- Many of the young women who participated in these group believed that their health and physical appearance would not be effected by their smoking because they brushed their teeth after smoking, washed their hands, showered, etc. The implication was that people who succumbed to smoking-related illnesses did not take care of themselves when they were young.

Little middle ground exists between smoking and addiction

- Relatively few smokers said they could give up cigarettes easily; these individuals tended to be social smokers and did not typically smoke everyday. Most of the participating young adult smokers considered themselves addicted and have been unable to quit. According to them, reaching kids before they begin smoking is more effective than trying to persuade them to quit once they have become addicted.

Marijuana and alcohol usage is high among smokers and non-smokers

- Most smokers and almost half of the non-smokers at least occasionally smoked marijuana.
- The majority of both smokers and non-smokers used alcohol; usage was higher among smokers.

Self-image was important to these young adults

- Fitting in and being respected by their friends and peers were important components of their self-image. They want to be perceived as smart, funny, attractive, and social. They do not view themselves as trend-followers or as being brand-conscious. However, this perception was contradicted by reality. Most of the participants – particularly African-Americans – tended to wear branded clothes and, except for the Latino group who mostly purchased Latin music and the participants from the Lambert house, who do not buy music, purchased the same two or three compact discs (Fifty-Cent and Aliyah).

"Cool" was difficult to define

- Defining the meaning of "cool" was difficult for attendees. Their responses appeared to indicate that cool meant being someone to whom others looked up and respected. Cool people have their own style and are influential. These young adults almost universally agreed, however, that one could not be cool without money. Money gives status and credibility.



Recommendations

- Incorporate images of reality into the creative direction – e.g., show people of different races that are fat, skinny, tall, short, etc. In other words, they should reflect the appearance of the target audience: typical young adults aged 18-24 who live in urban areas. Furthermore, these individuals have hardened lives and hardened lifestyles. They experience difficulties in their lives that need to be represented in the messaging in order to make a connection with these individuals.
- Make the copy relevant to the present time. Young adults cannot project the future consequences of an activity in which they participate today. These could include the impact on the voice (for singing), stamina for playing sports, or how smoking could affect their children. Smoking-related cancer, impotency and heart disease generally do not manifest their symptoms until middle age or older – well beyond the time horizon that most of these individuals can comprehend.
- Consider lowering the age of the target audience to grammar school age, possibly as young as 5 or 6 – before they begin experimenting. And continue to reinforce the messaging through high school.
- Develop a smoking cessation program for providing nicotine gum or patches at no or low cost to participants. These kids do not have the discretionary income to afford these products; many of them cannot even afford their smoking habit and resort to begging or stealing to sustain it. Make it easier for them quit.



Group Profiles

Group 1 – Center for Career Alternatives

The group consisted of teenagers aged 16 through 19 who were students at the Center for Career Alternatives just south of downtown Seattle. Nine of the participants were girls and three were boys. Six of the girls smoked cigarettes; none of the boys admitted to being smokers – although two of them indicated that they smoked occasionally on a written questionnaire. None of them used any other tobacco products. The racial composition of the group was eight African-Americans, two Asians, and one Hispanic. Three of the girls had small children. All were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In general, they were bright, articulate, and literate.

Most of them described themselves as happy, outgoing, attractive, respected and independent. They also liked to party. About half of them described themselves as "cool." The responses of the non-smokers did not differ from those of the smokers.

Group 2 – Shoreline Community College

Members of Group 2 were students at Shoreline Community College who belonged to a school-sponsored Latino cultural group; all were Latino young adults who ranged in age from 18-24. Eight of the participants were female and four were male. All were bilingual in Spanish and English; most appeared to be at least as comfortable speaking English as they were speaking Spanish. Only four group members identified themselves as smokers; however, another two indicated on the questionnaire that they at least occasionally smoked.

This group was clearly the most well off socio-economically of all the participating groups – most appeared to be working or middle class. Although the incidence of alcohol consumption was similar to that of other groups, they were the least likely to use any drugs; only one student smoked marijuana and none of them used any other drugs. They were also the most likely group to hide their smoking from their parents. Three group members had a child.

Most of the group described themselves as smart, happy, funny and social – although, none of them described themselves as popular.

Group 3 – West Seattle Youth Center

Group 3 was a mixed group of thirteen African-Americans and Asian-Americans whose ages ranged from 16 to 21. Of the ten young men, eight were smokers. All three of the young women were smokers. These young adults were all from low socio-economic backgrounds that participated in programs at the youth center.

Nearly all of these individuals described themselves as respected, cool, outgoing, funny, smart, and serious. This group had the highest incidence of substance abuse. All of the group members smoked marijuana at least occasionally; five of them also used other drugs. Most of them also used alcohol and drank coffee. Two of the young men had a child.



Group 4 – People of Color Against Aids Network (POCAAN)

This group consisted of 11 African-American and 3 Pacific Islanders who receive services and counseling from POCAAN. Most of the individuals were between 18 and 26; however 3 women were in their 40's. Two of the participants had never been smokers and one was a former smoker. This group was also only one of two groups who had no members that use other drugs.

Like Group 3, members were more likely to describe themselves as respected and cool than the other three groups. They also considered themselves outgoing, good looking, funny, and serious. They were also one of two groups who were least likely to describe themselves as smart.

Group 5 – The Lambert House

Group 5 was the most diverse of all of the groups – a mixture of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered youth who use the social services provided by the Lambert House, plus a few straight homeless young adults who stayed at the shelter provided by the Lambert House. Six of the group members were white; two were African-American and two were Hispanic or Native American. All of the group members were homeless or lacked permanent housing.

Although one individual described herself as an ex-smoker, all of the participants indicated that they at least occasionally smoked. More than half smoked marijuana and all but one used alcohol. This group also had the highest incidence of coffee-drinkers.

Like Group 3, members were more likely to describe themselves as respected and cool than the other three groups. They also considered themselves outgoing, good looking, funny, and serious. They were also one of two groups who were least likely to describe themselves as smart.

Group Characteristics

The tables below show a comparison between groups of their self-descriptors and drug use. More detailed information can be found in on page 23.

Top 5 Self-Descriptors

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Likes to party Outgoing Usually happy Good looking Smart	Smart Usually happy Likes to party Athletic Funny	Respected Outgoing Funny Smart Likes to party Cool Serious	Respected Good looking Outgoing Cool Smart	Likes to party Respected Outgoing Smart Good looking



Current Habits

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Smoked cigarettes	8	6	11	10	10
Used other tobacco products	0	2	0	0	4
Drank coffee	8	8	8	5	8
Smoked marijuana	9	1	13	2	6
Used alcohol	10	11	11	6	9
Used other drugs	1	0	5	0	4



Smoking Behaviors

Nearly all members from all groups had tried smoking early – most of them in their early adolescence; some participants were as young as 4 or 5 when their parents or other relative gave them a drag off of a cigarette. The typical age for beginning to smoke, however, was between 11 and 15 years of age.

Common behavioral elements included:

- Close family members smoke.
- Smoking was a school activity in junior high and high school.
- The first cigarettes nearly always came from parents, siblings or cousins.
- About two-thirds of those group members who smoked, smoked every day.
- Because many of the participants were students or jobless, a number of the smokers begged, borrowed, or stole their supply of cigarettes. Relatives, friends, and baby daddy (their child's father) were the sources of cigarettes. Those smokers with jobs usually purchased their own cigarettes.
- Being "shysty" (stingy) with one's cigarettes was not cool.
- Almost all African-American participants smoked either Cool or Newport branded cigarettes. A few were even aware that the companies that manufactured these brands specifically targeted African-American neighborhoods with outdoor advertising. When asked why they smoked these brands, the response was almost always "it's what everyone else smokes."

Why they started

Curiosity was the reason given most often for trying cigarettes. Although the first cigarette made most of them lightheaded or nauseous, they tried again – apparently, to find out why other people kept smoking. Some kids smoked their first cigarette with friends or close relatives such as siblings or cousins; others smoked their first cigarette alone. Those who smoked their first cigarette alone seemed to be more likely to say they smoked to relieve stress or depression than other smokers did.

"I thought I was going to die."

"It was my first time. Maybe I just did it wrong."

Addiction

Most of the regular smokers craved cigarettes and admitted to being addicted. Relatively few of them were Chippers – according to *The Tipping Point*, chipper

"We all know it's bad...but I'm addicted. I could quit but I need to change my friends. I tried to quit but I got stressed and asked friends for a cigarette."

is someone who can stop and start smoking at will without becoming addicted. Some smoked when they were bored, stressed, or depressed but most could not identify a time or situation when they were most likely to smoke. The exception was other substance abuse. A significant number of these smokers

liked to smoke when they drank; a few used cigarettes to "boost" their highs from marijuana or other drugs.



Relatively few group members wanted to quit. Some of them had tried unsuccessfully. All of those who had tried to quit felt that anti-smoking aids such as nicotine gum or patches either did not work or were too expensive to be practical.

All of the girls with children quit while pregnant. The other girls agreed that they would not smoke while pregnant; however, they admitted that they would probably resume as soon as the baby was born.

Why young adults smoke

The participants were asked why people in their age group smoked. The reasons given seemed to align into two separate categories:

1. Kids and young adults smoked to fit in with their friends and other peers. Not just to be cool, not to be seen as a leader, but to be part of, and accepted by, a peer group. Some individuals said non-smokers could be excluded from peer groups. To remain part of the group, they had to smoke."
2. The second category of reasons for smoking consisted of how smoking made one feel – the emotional content of smoking. These individuals smoked because they were stressed from school, family, or other life-activities. Others smoked when they were depressed or angry; it made them feel better or more relaxed.

*"People let you down;
cigarettes never do."*

Second-hand smoke

The issue of second-hand smoke was raised in some of the groups. Many participants were somewhat confused as to the actual health impacts of second-hand smoke; some were skeptical about the effect of second-hand smoke on non-smokers because they believed the smoker inhales most of the toxins and what is exhaled is relatively clean. However, most participants said they were considerate of non-smokers and none of the parents smoked in front of their kids. Most of the parents expressed the certainty that their children would not smoke because they would teach them not to.

Defining a Smoker

The participants were asked to brainstorm words or phrases that described a smoker. These responses were collected and posted for a group discussion. The list below are all the adjectives and descriptors from all of the groups

- Ignorant/stupid
- Silly
- Ugly
- Nasty
- Bad/ugly/yellow teeth
- Bad breath
- Stress/bad nerves
- Not healthy
- Smells bad/funky/stinky
- Not cool
- Follower
- Yellow nails
- Suicide



- Early death
- Cancer
- Homeless
- Sleepy
- Loud
- Fake smokers (someone who wastes cigarettes or joints by pretending to smoke)
- Cool
- Depressed/sad
- Lonely
- Stressed
- Morning high
- Angry/mad
- Sex/sexuality
- Foul
- Annoying
- Fun
- Crazy
- Wild
- Lonely
- Unattractive
- Good looking
- Sexy
- Skinny
- Sad
- Social
- Stressed out and worried
- When you get angry
- Naive
- Addicted
- Relaxed
- Drinking (parties)
- Bored

All but one of the groups collectively created a composite of someone that smelled bad, had poor hygiene, had yellowed teeth and nails, and little regard for their health – a typical stereotype. In general, participants thought this description was accurate but did not fit any of them, nor did it fit anyone they knew personally – perhaps indicating that they were receiving the commercial anti-smoking messages but were unable to relate them to their own situation.

Smoking and health

Relatively few group members felt that smoking had any impact on their health now. Those who did mentioned that it affected their ability to sing or play sports. Most felt that smoking would not affect them until they were much older, if at all.



Cool

One of the hypotheses used in developing this research was that smokers were perceived to be "cool." Part of the discussion focused on the definition of cool and who was considered cool.

Almost all of the participants across all of the groups felt that they were not influenced by anyone. If they were, they believed their family and friends were the most influential, not the media. A few admitted to being influenced by outside influences like pop stars.

In trying to define cool, participants had difficulty expressing what being cool meant or why someone was cool. In other words, cool was something they knew when they saw it but could not explicitly define.

"[Cool is] the way other people think of you. Popular. Fitting in with the crowd."

With respect to their clothes, they claimed they did not follow trends or their friends. Although they might wear or would like to wear Jordans, Timberland,

"I like what looks good on me and what I'm comfortable with. [A] nice looking man influences me."

British Knights, etc., they did so because they liked how they looked, not because they liked the brand. However, their behavior indicated brand name was important. Even those individuals who said they were not influenced by brand usually wore at least one item of popularly branded apparel to the focus group session. The one exception was the group from the

Lambert House whose members were homeless, jobless, and/or without other support.

Whether or not they admitted to being cool or admiring cool, self-image seemed to be very important to these young adults. They wanted to look good, dress well, and be admired, or at least fit in, with their peers. Especially, the young women, who made a special effort to eradicate the possible visual or olfactory effects of smoking by brushing their teeth after they smoked, making sure their clothes and hair did not smell, etc.

"I like when people ask me about my clothes. When my self-esteem is stroked. I like looking nice and having people comment."

Cool celebrities included Jet Li, Cedric the Entertainer, Aliyah, Biggie, Michael Jordan, Nelly, Vin Diesel, Robert DeNiro, Jay and Silent Bob, Matthew McConaughey, Jennifer Lopez, and Tupac Shakur. Interestingly, Tupac, Biggie, and Aliyah are dead, yet remained important icons to these teens.

Defining Cool

The participants were asked to perform the same brainstorming exercise for cool as they did for the smoker word. These responses defining cool were collected and posted for a group discussion.

- Fun or funny
- Attitude
- Nice
- Personality
- Creativity/original/unique
- People get along with you/Don't get brittle
- Popular
- Having people look up to you and copy you
- Fitting in



- Happy
- Cute
- Hip
- Not hypocritical
- Not too serious
- Not scary
- Hot
- Self control
- Punk
- Hardcore
- BMW (Black Man Working)
- Different race
- Cars
- Shoes
- Money
- Hair
- Clothes/Dressing nice
- Lifestyles
- Gangsters
- Athletes
- Teachers
- Drugs
- Guns
- Smart
- Sex
- Being yourself

In discussing these attributes, money became the most consistent element of cool between the groups. Most of them felt that external factors (money, hair, cars, clothes, etc.) were at least as important as internal attributes like personality, looks, and attitude. To them, money represented both the present and future. Even if one was good-looking, he or she couldn't be cool without money.

"Because if you don't have money, you can't take care of yourself – your hair, your clothes, your health."



Existing Advertising – The Three Posters

Three posters from earlier anti-smoking campaigns conducted in other states were presented to the group for their comments. They were briefly exposed to them at the beginning of the session for some top-of-mind reactions; they were brought out again later in the session for more in-depth discussion.

Poster #1 – Sucked In

This poster showed a cigarette and all of the chemical toxins and chemical by-products of smoking. The chemicals were depicted in their typical house format – e.g., benzene = gasoline; arsenic = rat poison.

Most of the participants understood the meaning of the ad and its context without any further explanation. Some had trouble with the difficulty of the words but understood the pictorial depiction. A number of participants voiced skepticism that cigarettes actually contained these toxins. And if they did contain poisons like the ones shown, the government would certainly outlaw them. Therefore, according to this logic, these individuals felt that this poster was at best an exaggeration and at worst, a lie.

"I'm a smoker...I love everything about it, but I didn't realize all that was in it. I'm still here and I'm fine. Is this a scare tactic?"

Many of the participants seemed curious about the toxins depicted in Poster #1; however they appeared to have difficulty relating to the impact those chemicals might have on their own bodies. While they believed that cigarettes do contain harmful ingredients, they often expressed the opinion that chemicals would not have any health impact for many years.

"Pesticides in food can cause lots of trouble too. People don't even know how bad food can be."

During the discussion of this poster, a side discussion began in a couple of the groups about the toxicity of marijuana. Marijuana usage was high among all participants – both smokers and non-smokers. However, many of them were unaware of any health risks associated with marijuana smoke. Many viewed marijuana as being "pure" or "organic." Participants in all groups who smoked marijuana and not tobacco cigarettes viewed themselves as non-smokers.

Poster #2 – Poster Child

Poster Child featured a young teen-aged girl with the physical impacts of long-term smoking superimposed on her body – e.g., cataracts, wrinkles, gum disease, etc.

Of the three posters, this poster elicited the strongest responses – possibly because of its explicit and graphic depiction of the smoking-related health problems and symptoms. Respondents clearly understood the message of this poster -- smoking could affect your health. However, they disagreed about the timeframe. Many did not believe a teenager would show any of these symptoms. Again, they expressed skepticism that any of these diseases or conditions could possibly affect them in the near future.

"Disgusting!"

"Ugly...her teeth are MESSED up!"

Many talked about friends or relatives that had smoked for many years and showed none of these symptoms.

Other participants felt that, while agreeing that smoking was bad for one's health, other elements such as food or the environment had a much bigger, potentially more negative effect on their health.

"I thought the mouth thing was from chewing tobacco."

"I believe this happens later in life."

A number of the young women also felt that they would remain unaffected by their smoking because they took care of themselves – e.g., they always brushed their teeth after smoking so they would never have dental discoloration or smoking-related gum disease. A couple of participants also expressed the belief that filtered cigarettes prevented many of the diseases shown on Poster Child.

Poster #3 – Impotent

The third poster showed a cowboy reminiscent of the Marlborough Man. In his mouth was a limp cigarette. The headline read "Impotent."

The meaning behind this poster was not clear to many participants – particularly young men. The young women were much more likely to catch onto the limp cigarette metaphor. This poster seemed to be the least effective for most of the groups – perhaps, because impotence is generally not the most common sexual dysfunction for young men in their late teens and early twenties. Nearly all of the young men mentioned that they had no problem with impotence and did not foresee a time when it would be a problem except when they were very old.

"This [poster] is a turn-off. There is no message telling me not to smoke."

A number of group members thought this poster of an attractive but non-functioning young cowboy might be more effective among young women than young men.



Anti-Smoking Advertising

Anti-smoking advertising recall

When asked about what other anti-smoking advertising they remembered seeing or hearing, the participants' most frequently given responses were:

- The Truth campaign – Body bags, the big cigarette companies, mailing poison and toxins through USPS, and ones with babies and/or pregnant mothers.
- Debbie, the older woman who smoked through her tracheotomy tube.
- The clogged artery.
- Woman driver who begins driving erratically after her passenger lights up a cigarette.
- Television ads showing a boy or girl whose body deteriorates as they continue smoking a cigarette.

Television commercials were the form of advertising mentioned most often. Posters were recalled a few times. The recent outdoor and transit advertising was only mentioned in one group.

Effects of anti-smoking advertising

Nearly all participants said that anti-smoking advertising had no effect on them; nor did they believe any future anti-smoking advertisements would have an effect on them. This assertion appeared to be true at the present time because virtually all of the participants had at least some knowledge of the dangers of smoking.

"I'm going to smoke until I die."

While they did not believe advertising would help someone stop smoking, many group members believed anti-smoking advertising might influence non-smokers not to start. A number of participants also believed that anti-smoking education needed to begin earlier before children begin to smoke. They suggested that it should begin in grammar school and continue through middle and high school. One group felt that a program like D.A.R.E. could be effective but that it needs to continue beyond grammar school.

"Ads trying to tell us to stop smoking. People are too ignorant. People don't care. It's their business to smoke if they want to."

"The kids in the posters don't look like they smoke."

Some participants also questioned why King County Public Health was so focused on smoking when, in their opinion, behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse were more harmful and life threatening.

Race

For most of the groups, advertising needed to show more diversity in race and the types of individuals shown. Many of the respondents wanted to see people who looked like them, not models; they had trouble relating to ads that showed only Caucasian people.

"I'm sick of seeing a white person – the stereotype. Give me some people that have gone through something. People of color – no blue-eyed skinny, blond-haired..."



Posters as the primary medium

Reactions to posters as the primary advertising medium were mixed. Some participants felt that posters could be effective, while others believed that their schools and health centers were already too cluttered with advertising. A few suggested that television would be the most effective media.

Anti-smoking video games

Most participants who were asked about video games as a potential anti-smoking medium did not think they would be effective in changing smoking behavior.

Other anti-smoking advertising themes

To see if other anti-smoking themes might be more effective, six concepts were tested:

1. Smoking costs money – For example, if you buy 3 packs a week, that's about \$1200 a year – what else could you do with that much money?
2. Not smoking means you're healthy and have more stamina for things like basketball, soccer, fun, sex...
3. Not smoking increases your sex appeal.
4. Showing a bunch of losers standing around smoking outside in the rain and compare them to a bunch of happy, cool people doing something fun.
5. Showing how second-hand smoke affects your kids.
6. Showing a celebrity that doesn't smoke.

Reaction to these themes was lukewarm at best. According to the participants, only a couple of them might be effective as themes in anti-smoking advertising – "smoking costs money" and "second-hand smoke can affect your children." Many of the participants reacted negatively to stereotyping smokers as losers. They felt that smokers were just as diverse as non-smokers were. They also felt that smokers were sexy, healthy and had the same stamina as non-smokers.

New anti-smoking advertising

The groups were asked what kind of advertising would have the most influence on smokers like themselves. Their suggestions included:

- A cigarette with a condom on it (using the cigarette as penis metaphor).
- Put an attractive woman walking away from the cowboy in Poster #3.
- Make a cigarette coffin.
- Show how smoking affects babies in the womb and all the way through. Or just on kids in general.
- Show people of color that real people can relate to in the city. What you use – like urban music.
- Grab real people. No models.
- Diversity. Everyone smokes and it can happen to everyone.
- [Show] kids locked up in Juvie (Juvenile Hall).



- Show more people of color because it seems like it's all white people. More real life people.
- Show people who really come from the streets. Show people are getting pimped by buying them [cigarettes].
- Put ads on the cigarette packs like they do in Canada. Show how much [money] the tobacco companies make.
- Showing all the different races would be better.
- Reverse psychology – smoke if you want; you're going to die. Tough love. Show people horrible things. You could lie, if done well – tell people to die soon so our air will be cleaner.
- Showing the effects of parents smoking around kids.
- Start earlier with kids before they try cigarettes.

Other possible anti-smoking programs

Some participants felt that on-location programs would be more effective than advertising. They felt actually seeing someone in person – particularly someone in their own age and ethnicity group – who was dying from smoking-related conditions could be effective in influencing smokers to quit. Others suggested that bringing Debbie [the dying smoker in a television and print advertisements] to schools might also be an effective anti-smoking tool.

Another suggestion was to develop some type of screening test – perhaps a blood sample – which could detect whether or not someone had smoked recently. These tests could be used to structure a program to reward smokers who quit.

A few also suggested lowering the cost of smoking cessation products like nicotine gum or patches to below that of cigarettes. Others in a couple of different groups recommended increasing the price of cigarettes dramatically (e.g., \$20, \$50, or even \$200 per pack) to incent smokers to quit.



Appendix

These tables show the raw numbers of the focus group attendees who participate in these behaviors.

Smoked Cigarettes

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Everyday	26	
A lot	2	
Some	4	
Not very often	8	
Never		10
Never tried		4

Drank Coffee

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Everyday	4	
A lot	3	
Some	5	
Not very often	14	7
Never	11	2
Never tried	2	2

Used Other Tobacco Products

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Everyday		
A lot		
Some	2	
Not very often	10	1
Never	25	4
Never tried		9



Smoked Marijuana

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Everyday	13	1
A lot	2	2
Some	6	2
Not very often	4	1
Never	13	4
Never tried	2	4

Used Other Drugs

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Everyday	2	
A lot	1	
Some		
Not very often	5	
Never	19	5
Never tried	11	9



CREATIVE RATIONALE

Client:

SEATTLE KING COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

Project Description:

Posters

Date:

April 30, 2003

This rationale was prepared by

John Schuler
206.368.0121 x 203

The individualistic style of the smoker was apparent throughout this whole process. Virtually all of them had heard of the health risks associated with smoking. They viewed typical campaigns as propaganda, spelled out in the language of the government, with white, middle class models portraying the target audience. Using scare tactics to try to curb smokers has also been used to the extreme, with sickened body parts put on display and organs being autopsied in front of us during dinner. As a society we may have become numb to the effects of these campaigns, however the scare tactic may still be effective for the younger demo that has yet to pick up a cigarette.

As smokers, we have seen these commercials and overcome their effectiveness through denial. Smokers live in the moment. Justifying their need for nicotine by blocking out their future. They use examples like the eighty year-old grandmother who still smokes and drives herself to the store everyday. They find reasons not to believe campaigns that push the limits of credibility, as was the case with the "Sucked In" campaign. They simply did not believe that the government would allow them to do something that was so detrimental to their health. They are, of course, wrong.

Curiosity and fitting in were the key reasons behind people beginning the process.

The individuals we met with helped us to design this campaign. They wanted honesty and they wanted people representative of their target group. They were intelligent individuals with dreams, families and a strong sense of self. They do not want to be judged, except perhaps, by their peers. But most certainly not by the City, County, State or Federal Government.

EXCLAIM's campaign against smoking goes by the name GET REAL. GET REAL refers directly to the smoker's already inherent knowledge of the health effects of smoking.

The basis for the campaign is the acknowledgement of the individuals right to choose what is best for them. This is not about telling people to stop smoking. Instead it is about suggesting that people stop because of the health risks involved. It is about freedom from the tobacco industry, who is identified with a face instead of a name. A white, upper class group of individuals bent on the destruction of human life for their own profit. And finally, it is about calling on the individual to make a choice for themselves based on their own knowledge which has been suppressed in order to further their habit.

Many of these posters are designed for individuals who already smoke. There are some concepts that would also work to help curb the curiosity of individuals who have yet to start, particularly the young.



Stacked Words

These three posters position messages in a way that forces the reader to get involved in a simple puzzle. Taking that extra second or two to “figure out” what the message is becomes very important. It creates interaction on a level that is not easy to achieve in a poster. The best part is that when the reader “gets” the puzzle, they have also gotten the message we are communicating. Because of this interaction, the reader cannot ignore this message.

A variety of messages can be used to communicate on different levels. We have chosen three separate messages. Kill Yourself is directed at the individual. Smoking Kills sooner is directed at the masses and My Parents Suck is directed at the individual whose parents are smokers, giving them permission to disagree with their parents on this issue.

Tagline: GET REAL about cigarettes plus Quit Line.

Addiction

Smokers are unable to associate the good feelings and relaxation associated with smoking as the definition of the habit itself. Unfortunately, those good feelings of the habit have striking consequences down the road. This series of posters is designed to create a relationship with the smoker through acknowledgement of their “reason” for smoking (eg. It feels good, or it relaxes me, etc.).

Well the next time you are relaxing with a smoke, remember that it’s the addiction that is controlling those feelings. Remember is a key word used to create an action, in this case we instruct people to remember this poster when they are smoking. This concept does not talk about health issues because the smoker is already aware of those. Instead it is designed to counter the reasons they give for smoking and again, calls on them to make a decision as an individual to GET REAL...

Tagline: GET REAL about cigarettes plus Quit Line.

Problems

Smokers often don’t view smoking as their biggest problem. The hidden ills do not compare to the day-to-day pains that some of these individuals endure. Cigarettes are there to help them through these times by feeding their addiction and keeping them relaxed.

Again, the concept relates to the smoker and the issues that they face on a daily basis, but calls on them to consider their future problems. It falls short of telling them to stop, giving them the information to make their own decision.



Get Real. Real Dead.

This is designed for those who are not yet addicted to nicotine, or have not started smoking. The images are spooky. Perhaps people lying on the ground with smoke streaming from their mouths. Eerie and to the point. This could also act as the main branding

Big Tobacco, the people.

This concept banks on the presumption that smokers in these groups view the tobacco companies as big corporations made up of factories and buildings. Big monster machines. What we want to communicate here is that tobacco companies are in fact, rich upper class white folks who are thriving in business because these kids keep pumping money into their pockets. We want to put an evil face on the people who are controlling the lives of our target group. This control issue is another factor. The smoker likes to feel in control of their lives. They are the one who decides to smoke or not, etc.

By creating a heavy, rich white dude to represent a figure that is really in control of their lives, we can challenge their views of society as a whole... particularly with relation to whites vs. minorities. We draw on the energy that already exists here and focus that energy on this campaign. Our rich dude is a tobacco mogul that laughs at the stupidity of the smoker and their willingness to pump money into his pockets so he can enjoy the good life. He is a pickpocket that takes money, respect and lives. He steals will. And he laughs all the while. The only time he is sad is when you (the smoker) die and he loses another customer.

Advertising Mediums

Although the posters are effective and necessary communication devices due to their placement in public gathering places and medical facilities, the posters alone cannot create the awareness necessary to generate the results you are after.

As you know, in order to saturate the market and gain the best results, it is necessary to develop a variety of media options, specifically targeted to this younger audience. These may include, TV, Cable, Radio, Outdoor, Bus boards, Transit ads, Print (daily, weekly, magazines) and Internet. Timing, frequency and placement are also critical in order to gain the most value and change. There is nothing more effective than a repetitive message that is received from various angles all within a specified time frame.

The GET REAL campaign has been designed to take full advantage of all advertising mediums.



CREATIVE CONCEPTS

Client:

SEATTLE KING COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

Project Description:

Posters

Date:

April 30, 2003

This rationale was prepared by

John Schuler
206.368.0121 x 203

minorities?

Take a **real** look
at big tobacco



"just pieces of crap
sources of income
for me."

GET REAL
about cigarettes.

Quit: 877-270-STOP

When it feels good,

REMEMBER



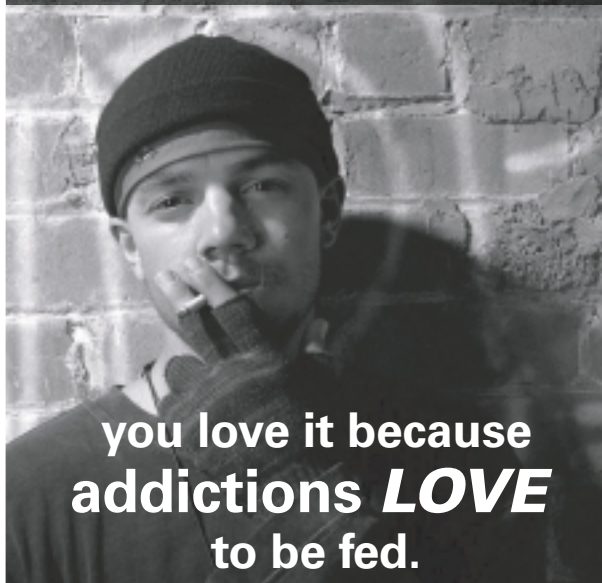
you love it because
addictions **LOVE**
to be fed.

GET REAL
about cigarettes.

Quit: 877-270-STOP

When it relaxes you,

REMEMBER



you love it because
addictions **LOVE**
to be fed.

GET REAL
about cigarettes.

Quit: 877-270-STOP

SMOKE

?

BIG TOBACCO WANTS YOU TO THINK

YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE.

TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS, THEY ARE...

and they laugh at you every day.



MY P ARENTS SUCK

PARENT'S THAT SMOKE
MAY NOT BE SENDING
THE RIGHT MESSAGE.

DON'T LISTEN, DON'T SMOKE.

GET REAL
about cigarettes.

Quit: 877-270-STOP

FOCUS GROUP REPORT PHASE II

Client:

SEATTLE KING COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

Project Description:

Smoking prevention focus group
findings and report – Phase 2

Date:

July 25, 2003

This report was prepared by

Mai Li Lee
206.368.0121 x 204

Introduction

Purpose

King County Public Health (KCPH) and their advertising agency, EXCLAIM, developed an advertising campaign using posters that targeted young adult smokers, aged 18 to 24 years of age, who lived in ethnic and minority communities within King County. Similar poster campaigns have been conducted in other areas of the country.

The intent of the posters was to provide these young adults with information about the health dangers associated with smoking and encourage them to quit. Using the feedback from the focus group participants in Phase I of the research, EXCLAIM created six new anti-smoking posters. The purpose of these focus groups was to garner comments on the creative direction and the six treatments of the topic among the same groups who participated in the earlier focus groups.

Methodology

A total of five focus groups were conducted, beginning on May 21, 2003 and ending on June 20, 2003. These groups were held in youth centers and other locations in King County that provide social services to young adults. Each group had 10-13 attendees and most of the participants took part in the March groups. Additional participants were recruited by the directors of these agencies using guidelines provided by KCPH and EXCLAIM. Most of the participants were aged 18 to 24. The majority of the attendees were African-American – although one group was entirely Latino and another was comprised of white and Latino youth that were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and/or homeless. Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders were also represented in some of the groups.

In total, 33 attendees identified themselves as smokers; 17 were nonsmokers. The focus groups each lasted approximately an hour and a half. Attendees were paid \$30.

Note: Qualitative research is based on small sample sizes. The findings of this study should not be considered to be representative of the total population of young adults aged 18-24. Observation and understanding of the reactions within this sample are useful in identifying the motivations of targeted individuals.



Summary

The posters were shown to each group one at a time. For each of the posters, the participants were asked to jot down a few thoughts about the poster and give it a rating from one to ten. A rating of ten meant they thought the poster was very effective at communicating a nonsmoking message; a rating of one meant the poster was not effective at all. At the conclusion of the groups, everyone listed their favorite and least favorite posters.

While data from focus groups are not statistically significant or projectable, two posters clearly stood out as not being effective: My Parents Suck and Big Tobacco. The ratings for the other four posters were fairly similar.

However, when weighing the individual mean ratings of each poster by their "favorite" and "least favorite" ranking and then subtracting the "least favorite" scores from those of the "favorite", the results were quite interesting. These were compiled by multiplying the mean rating for each poster by the number of individuals who voted it their favorite poster to give a composite "favorable" score; and then multiplying the mean rating again by number of individuals who ranked it as their least favorite poster to come up with a mean "unfavorable score." The factors and scores have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

	Favorability
	<u>Score</u>
Addictions - Male	68
Mess You Up	63
Addictions - Female	16
Smoke	5
My Parents Suck	-19
Big Tobacco	-67

Clearly, Addictions - Male and Mess You Up had the most appeal across the groups – although each of the six posters had its own individual strengths and weaknesses among the participants.

¹ These were compiled by multiplying the mean rating for each poster by the number of individuals who voted it their favorite poster to give a composite "favorable" score; and then multiplying the mean rating again by number of individuals who ranked it as their least favorite poster to come up with a mean "unfavorable score." The factors and scores have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

	Mean Rating	# Favorite Votes	# Least Favorite Votes	Favorite Factor	Unfavorable Factor	Score
My Parents Suck	1.1	1	18	1	20	-19
Smoke	2.5	6	4	15	10	5
Addictions - Female	4.0	5	1	20	4	16
Big Tobacco	3.5	0	19	0	67	-67
Addictions - Male	4.0	17	0	68	0	68
Mess You Up	3.5	19	2	66	3	63



Conclusions & Recommendations

- For every group, respect played in an important role. These young adults clearly do not want to be talked down to, nor do they like being confronted about their lifestyle choices.
- They want a clear, straightforward message – no ambiguity.
- The layout and overall design approach should be straightforward as well. The colors and graphics sometimes diverted the participants' attention from the message.
- The female model used in two of the posters distracted from the message. Some participants were unclear as to her addiction and thought that perhaps her problem was drugs, not cigarettes. Others found her androgyny discomfoting. Someone less polarizing would allow the target audience to focus on overall message and not just one element.
- The racist tobacco company theme overwhelmed the anti-smoking message. This ad is not likely to be a successful vehicle for communicating an anti-smoking message because few individuals could see past what seemed to them as racist overtones.
- Mess You Up and Addictions Love to Be Fed – Male were definitely the two posters that seem to be the most effective among the individuals who participated in this study. However, based on the responses to these posters, each seemed like it would benefit from some minor adjustments.
- The effectiveness of "Mess You Up" might be enhanced by some minor changes of the visual aspects of the poster – a new picture, eliminate the differentiation of the letters, EOU.
- Re-scripting the copy to be more directed towards smoking – perhaps tweaking the headline "Addictions Love to Be Fed."
- Addictions Love to Be Fed – Female may also be a good candidate for the campaign if the female model were replaced with someone less disturbing and a little more mainstream – someone individuals in this age range can relate to – urban, ethnic, and unambiguous.



FINAL CREATIVE

Client:

SEATTLE KING COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

Project Description:

Posters

Date:

December 1, 2003

This report was prepared by

Mai Li Lee
206.368.0121 x 204

When it relaxes you,
{remember}



it's because addictions
love to be fed

GET REAL
about cigarettes

Take control of your life.

877.270.STOP (7867)

www.quitline.com

When it relaxes you,
{remember}



it's because addictions
love to be fed

GET REAL
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{remember}



it's because addictions
love to be fed

GET REAL
about cigarettes

Take control of your life.

877.270.STOP (7867)

www.quitline.com

Smoking may be your smallest
problem now,



but a HOLE in your
lung LATER will

MESS YOU UP!

GET REAL
about cigarettes

STOP

**Los cigarros son
menos regulados que
la comida para perros.**



Arsénico/
cianuro

Amoniaco

Butano/
Benceno

Alquitrán

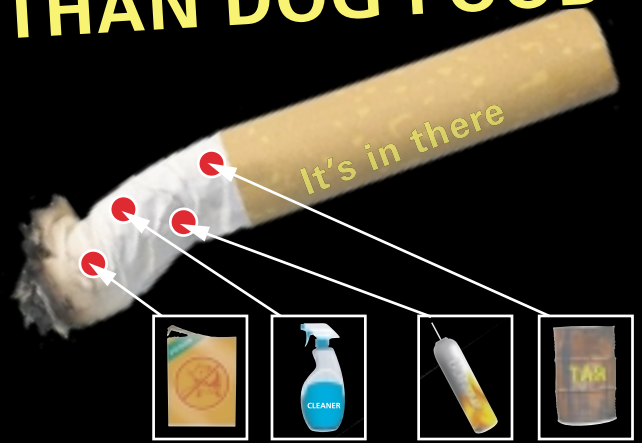
**Los cigarros contienen 200
venenos conocidos y de 40-60
agentes carcinógenos.**

Los químicos encontrados en estos artículos comunes
están en los cigarros o en el humo de éstos.

*En cuanto al cigarro,
¡pon los pies en la tierra!*

**Toma control de tu vida
877.270.STOP (7867)
www.quitline.com**

**CIGARETTES ARE
LESS REGULATED
THAN DOG FOOD**



Arsenic/
Cyanide

Ammonia

Butane/
Benzene

Tar

**Cigarettes contain 200 known poisons
and 40-60 cancer-causing agents.**

The chemicals found in these common items are in cigarettes or cigarette smoke.

GET REAL
about cigarettes

Take control of your life.

**877.270.STOP (7867)
www.quitline.com**